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Wednesday, 2 June 1999

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Peru:

Upswing in Guerrilla Activity

The Sendero Luminoso (SL) guerrillas—relatively inactive during the first few months of this year—in recent weeks have raised their profile by launching several small attacks. The rebels last Friday killed one policeman and three civilians during an assault on a rural bank and a week earlier shot and beheaded four members of a peasant militia, according to press reports.

— [] authorities suspect the group was responsible for the ambushing on 28 April of a police patrol, leaving one officer dead and two wounded. []

The rebels' switch to more aggressive tactics could be an attempt to convince the public that they remain a force to be reckoned with and to embarrass President Fujimori as he prepares to run for a third term next year. The guerrillas may be counting on security forces to overreact, which could alienate the population and help swell their thin ranks.